

# Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Park

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



## Velvet grass in the Kern River Canyon Special grazing restrictions in effect

### What is velvet grass and why is it important?

Velvet grass (*Holcus lanatus*) is a perennial bunchgrass native to Europe with velvety gray-green leaves. It is a highly invasive species which produces large amounts of seed and rapidly colonizes disturbed ground. It dominates habitats by forming dense patches with impenetrable root mats, making it difficult for other seeds to get started. Velvet grass prefers seasonally wet locations, but its seeds survive droughts and hot summers.

Velvet grass was introduced to North America in pasture seed mixes, and has already reached almost untreatable proportions in other parks in California. It has been quietly invading mid-elevation meadows in the Kern Canyon for several years. Velvet grass has the potential to completely replace most of the plants in meadows, wetlands, and riparian areas. These ecosystems are critical for habitat protection, native species diversity, biomass, productivity and scenic vistas.



### What is the NPS doing about velvet grass in the Kern Canyon?

Velvet grass was discovered in the Kern Canyon in 2006 near the Kern Ranger Station and at Lower Funston Meadow. A single patch found at Upper Funston Meadow was removed. Surveys also revealed numerous populations on USFS lands south of the Kern Ranger Station. A coordinated effort to control velvet grass through hand pulling started in 2006.

In 2012, we will focus on controlling populations in the park while striving to maintain the remaining wildlands in a weed-free condition. A 12-person crew will treat velvet grass near the Kern Ranger Station and Lower Funston Meadow by hand pulling. We will closely monitor the rest of the canyon for new introductions and will be working with the USFS to reduce spread of velvetgrass back to park lands. Some dense patches of velvet grass, up to one acre, will be treated with an aquatically-approved herbicide called Rodeo. This herbicide contains glyphosate, the same active ingredient found in Roundup. It is among the safest herbicides for humans and the environment. Through vigilance, we hope to stop the spread of this invasive weed while controlling the established populations. In the long term, we hope to be able to eradicate this plant from park lands.

### Special grazing restrictions in the Kern Canyon in 2012

Temporary grazing restrictions are in effect along the floor of the Kern River Canyon in 2012 to prevent the spread of velvet grass seed from the southern part of the canyon into the northern part of the canyon.

The areas between the park boundary at the Kern Ranger Station and Laurel Creek are closed to all grazing.

Grazing of meadows between Laurel Creek and the Kern-Kaweah River is limited to parties accessing the canyon from the west, north, or east. Parties entering the park from the south passing through USFS lands are required to pack in feed and hold their stock once velvet grass begins flowering.

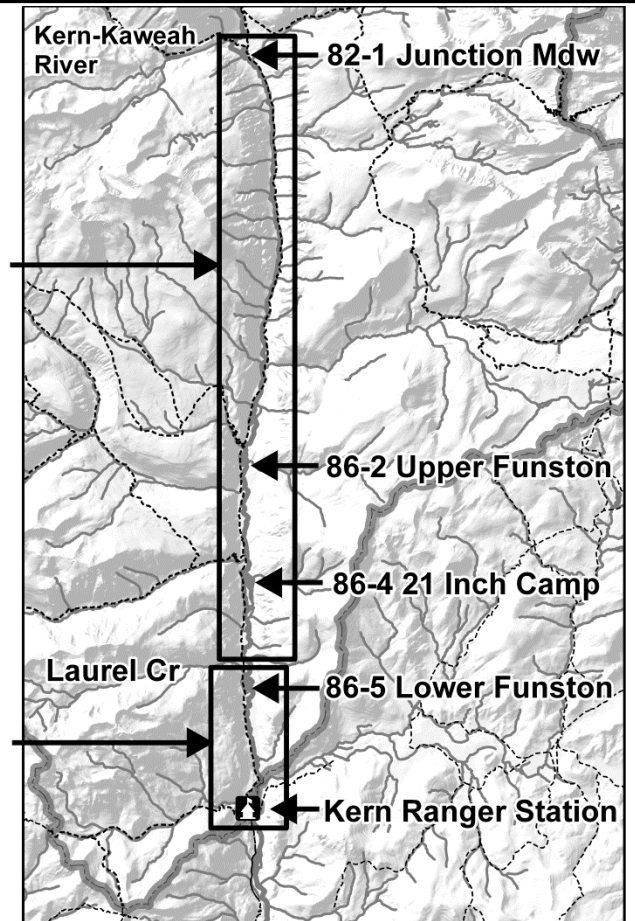
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## Special grazing restrictions in the Kern Canyon in 2012 (continued)

**Laurel Creek to Kern-Kaweah River:** Grazing allowed for parties coming from the west, north, or east.

Once velvetgrass flowers in the spring, this area will be closed to grazing by parties coming from the south where velvet grass is more widespread. Includes **Junction Meadow (82-1)**, **Kern Bridge Camp (86-1)**, **Upper Funston Meadow (86-2)**, and **21 Inch Camp (86-4)**. Grazing at **Upper Funston Meadow (86-2)** is for commercial and private users only.

**Kern Ranger Station to Laurel Creek:** Closed to grazing except for administrative use of **Lewis Camp (86-7)** and **Kern Station Small Pasture (86-8)**. Includes **Lower Funston Meadow (86-5)** and **Rattlesnake Camp (86-6)**.



## How can I help?

Visitors to the Kern Canyon (and throughout our public lands) can help prevent the spread of this invasive weed, and introduction of other non-native plants, by observing a few key precautions.

*If you are traveling with pack stock:*

- Groom your animals thoroughly before riding on public lands to remove any weed seeds that may be 'riding' on your animals;
- If you are feeding your animals hay, make sure that it is certified as weed-free or fermented hay;
- If you carry feed for your animals, we recommend using fermented hay or pellets, as the heat and mechanical treatment used in processing kills most weed seeds that may be present;
- Feed your animals on a tarp or mantle to prevent seed from being spread; be sure and shake it out into the fire pit before you leave, not on the ground or in the meadow.

*When traveling by foot:*

- All visitors are encouraged to be weed aware. Take care to clean boots, clothing, and equipment of all weed seed before visiting public lands.

## Where can I get more information?

For information about weed control and prevention, contact Matt Bahm, Invasive Plant Ecologist, at Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks at 559-565-3720.

You may also contact the Wilderness Information Office at 559-565-3766, or visit: [www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm](http://www.nps.gov/seki/planyourvisit/wilderness.htm) for more information about visiting the wilderness of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks.

Thank you for your efforts and support to keep parklands wild and healthy!